ETTERSBURG STRAWBERRIES

Origin and History

19 26

About 40 years ago the writer, then living near Ferndale, California, became interested in the breeding of strawberries. Being only a boy of 13, with neither teacher or books to direct him in acquiring a knowledge of plant-breeding, he was forced to rely on his own observations. Nature in the open was his books and sole reliance to master the art of plant-breeding. Born with a natural capacity for the work, the mastering the art was not very difficult, and self-reliance made for that originality that has characterized this work from the start and easily places it as a distinct epoch in the breeding of strawberries.

Other breeders have selected breeding stock for fine fruit alone, while I mingled races regardless of quality of fruit, my sole ambition being to produce abnormal development.

WHAT IS ABNORMAL DEVELOPMENT?

Some say the ambition of the plant-breeder is to produce the S-U-P-E-R-I-O-R. The compass of the plant-breeder always points to the abnormal, and we are little concerned about "superior" in the game of plant-breeding. Our means employed in improving types to better meet our wants are all aimed to produce the abnormal. Nature is satisfied to produce normal types of her species, and the laws of heredity holds them in balance. Man wants an abnormal type to meet his wants, and is continually bucking the laws of heredity, as is the mechanical builder bucking up against the laws of gravitation.

If gravitation was absolute, I would not be writing this, because specific gravity would determine the position of every substance composing the earth, and the whole earth would be covered with water. Cohesion, friction and stress are factors that limit the absolute power of the law of gravitation, and by employing these agents to advantage, man is able to build bridges, great buildings, etc.

If the law of heredity was absolute, mar could do nothing —and the most of him wouldn't be here, because foodstuffs would not be available as they are now. Lucky for him, God has given him a fighting chance to "earn his bread in the sweat of his brow" by making the law of heredity run just a little wabbly. A constant force bucking against the law of heredity will assert itself in producing a variation from the normal type just as a pillar will support a beam and thwart the law of gravitation. But remove either and either law will assert itself. The plant-breeder's art is to employ any means within his reach to buck against the law of heredity and produce the abnormal types man's existence depends upon.

PLANT-BREEDING IS NOT EVOLUTION.

Plant-breeding is not the making of new species, but producing artificially abnormal types more or less permanent, just as a bridge is more or less permanent. It is no longer permanent when the piers are knocked out from under it. If we some time in the future develop an engineer who can get away from gravitaion's forces and builds a bridge without piers to support it, I will be hopeful then that some time we may master evolution and get it on a workable basis.

ETTERSBURG STRAWBERRIES—THE "MAKINGS"

To produce the long line of types and variations in color, flower and the qualities that have made Ettersburg Strawberries mark a distinct epoch in the strawberry world. I have used the following wild species in a sort of a "melting pot", such as America has used in producing the American nation. Frugaria Chiloenis, or Sand Strawberry from Alaska, Cape Mendocino, Point Arena, Peru and Chili; F. CALIFORNICA, the common wood-strawberry; F. CUNEIFOLIA from Oregon; F. VESCA, the wild Alpine strawberry from Europe; F. DUCHESNE, from southern China; and among the common cultivated sorts, the SHARPLESS, PARRY, MICHEL'S EARLY, BEDEWOOD, WM. BELT, and several other varieties. Never in my work have I used the cultivated varieties in crosses other than as I would use a wild form—that is, to get a blood cross. Almost from the beginning, my work has "stood on its own legs," breeding from my own originations. Much of the breeding stock I have used has never been introduced—indeed, nobody but myself knows more than a very small percent of what I have done in strawberries.

To make an estimate of the influence my work will have on the future of strawberry culture is quite impossible. Here at Ettersburg, the common Eastern stock of strawberries amount to but little, while the Ettersburg hybrids are five times as vigorous and grow almos wild, producing berries in profusion. As to quality, a patch of seedlings of such mixed parentage run with extreme variation—some are most excellent, others are ill-flavored to nasty. Of course only the finest flavored ones are propagated, but among these are the finest flavored of all strawberries. The outstanding difference between the Ettersburg varieties and the common varieties of Eastern origin is the wide range of flavors and general differences in quality, form and texture. The varieties I have selected for propagation are the best among the thousands of seedlings from which they were selected. The culture of these hybrid strawberries is not particularly different from that of the Eastern varieties, only in that they require a little more space in distance of planting, and owing to greater robustness they will thrive on ground less fertile. From the evergreen Beach Strawberries they inherit a tendency to grow wherever temperatures permit. In Ohio they are reported as having come out from under a light snow blanket and temperature several degrees below zero, retaining their green foliage. Here in California they get in a very long growing season, and are much less severely attacked by the strawberry crown borer than are the Eastern varieties. The plants are very much longer lived also, and in tests made here plants 1 or 2 years old take hold and grow when set out as well as new sets. This of course contradicts horticultural writers on the strawberry plants — but it is to be remembered that they are writing of different species of strawberries. The roots of the Beadarena are always light-colored, and do not turn black in hardened sheaths like some varieties do.

DESCRIPTION OF VARIETIES.

Ettersburg No. 80.—

This variety is one in a million, succeeding under very wide latitude of climatic conditions. It succeeds along the Pacific Coast from San Diego to Seattle. It is one of the best for the interior valley region; and in Kern County, near Shafter, it was pronounced the best variety in a rather wide test conducted by Mr. H. Kretchmar. In the Coachella Valley where the temperature soars up to 124 degrees in the shade, Ettersburg No. 80 has been dubbed the "Fireproof" strawberry. It has won favor in New Zealand and Australia, in Texas and New York, Michigan and Maryland, and in Switzerland it has done remarkably well. But it is no more a cosmopolitan in ability to grow and do well than it is to be an all around good strawberry for many and varied purposes.

It is a splendid dessert or jam berry, and canned, it is one of the very best, holding its shape well and of particularly fine flavor, tho lacking somewhat in color.

It has very broad dark green glossy foliage, has large perfect blossoms, almost globular shaped fruit, solid and meaty. It is very productive, berries bright red, with flesh of lighter shade. Succeeds almost anywhere except on ground too rich and moist

Ettersburg No. 121.—

This is a great canning variety, and not even related to the common strawberry, being a cross between the wild Alpine

and Cape Mendocino Beach species. The blossom is perfect, the fruit globular, medium to small in size, red to the center, will not fade when canned, very solid and firm, and can't be boiled to pieces. It is high-flavored, having a snap to it peculiar to itself. Under favorable conditions it is very productive, and the berries get up to one inch in diameter, but in most regions they do not grow so large. Its most favored region is from San Francisco Bay northward to Oregon, where it is widely grown in the Willamette Valley, succeeding farther from the coast as one goes northward. As a dessert berry it is remarkably fine for those who like a vigorous flavor with plenty of kick in it.

Trebla.—

"Trebla" reads "Albert" backward and is my own registered trade-mark for nursery stock in California. Trebla is one of the most unique strawberries ever originated, and is a mixture of many varieties and species. Like Ettersburg No. 121 it succeeds best on the coast here in California, tho it does well on the coast down to San Diego. It is widely grown in Oregon, Washington and British Columbia, and is a favorite with canners for canning, jams and preserves. It is phenomenally productive, and the plants are vigorous enough to bear the crop. While I don't want to make the average grower think he can do what I did with Trebla here, it is at least a record any variety might be proud of. The first fifteen Trebla plants I had to set out, 18 months after setting turned off forty-five quarts of husked berries in a picking season of about five weeks, or three quarts of berries for each and every plant.

Trebla has a perfect blossom and a relatively long blooming season with the blossoms well protected from the frost. It will produce a good crop of berries in a frosty blossoming season where many other varieties would lose almost their entire crop. The berries are red to the center and will not fade in cooking, nor will they boil to pieces. They have a brisk flavor, and when well grown are a good dessert fruit. As an all-round, dependable berry they are hard to beat along the Coast, but are not as satisfactory in the interior as Ettersburg No. 80, tho this is not entirely true. While not quite up to the quality of Ettersburg No. 121 for canning purposes, they are far superior to the common varieties for canning, preserves or jam.

Beaderarena.—

Beaderarena is a seedling of the Point Arena Beach Strawberry crossed with the Eastern variety BEDEWOOD. In this variety we have an entirely distinct type from any of the preceding types described. The fruit is bright, lustrous, red and very sweet and delightfully flavored for a dessert fruit. The blossoms are imperfect, but when provided with another variety alongside, such as Trebla or Ettersburg No. 80, or any other perfect blossomed variety, every blossom will make a perfect berry. The berries are held free of the ground and are medium to large. The plants are very vigorous and extremely long lived, and are at home all along the Coast from San Diego to British Columbia. They are almost as able to shift for themselves as is the native beach strawberry, which they greatly resemble in foliage and manner of growth. The Beaderarena is recommended for those who find the ordinary varieties hard to grow in their sandy soils, and for those who desire a mild, sweet strawberry—not the punk sweet or insipid sweet of some, but a high-flavored, non-acid sweet.

Beaderarena, Jr.—

Beadarena Jr. is a seedling of Beadarena. It is different from the parent only in being more exquisitely flavored, bearing for the better part of the summer, and in not holding its fruit free of the ground. It is one of the finest flavored of all sweet strawberries.

Redfour.—

Redfour is another unique type of canning strawberry. It is of good size, nearly round and very early and bears all summer here. It is a fine berry for any purpose and bears a big crop. Blossoms are perfect, and every blossom makes a berry. Redfour is a seedling of Ettersburg No. 121 crossed with Trebla.

Fendalcino.—

In this superb variety, a seedling of Fendall crossed wih Ettersburg No. 121, we have a berry much alike in general character with Banner, tho it is of finer quality. It is very productive. In a test here beside Banner, it produced almost 40% more berries. It is early to ripen and bears all summer along the Coast. Along the Southern California Coast it is most satisfactory, being resistant to mildew and an excellent local market variety. It has an imperfect blossom and is not a good canning type, tho a perfect dessert berry.

Redcross.—

Redcross is a most delightful berry of a mild sweet flavor. It succeeds all along the Coast and produces well. It has a perfect blossom, holds its fruit free of the ground, and stands heat well. The roots are long like those of the native Beach Strawberry, while the whole nature of the plant above ground savors of the native wood strawberry. As a dessert fruit it is hard to beat, tho it is not recommended for canning. It is fine for jam and preserves.

Latecross.—

This is a late, large, late variety, with fruit much like the Ettersburg No. 80 in general quality. It has an imperfect blossom and bears heavy crops. It has splendid foliage and roots more like the native Beach Strawberry than any other of my hybrids. Latecross is a new vaiety, and this is its first introduction.

Ettersburg No. 617.—

This is another new variety. It is of distinct Beach type and has large deep-red, juicy, and well-flavored berries. From appearances it seems that it should grow where the native Beach Strawberry grows. It has imperfect blossoms and needs another variety, such as Ettersburg No. 80, to pollenize it, or it will not be fruitful. Then every blossom will make a big luscious, bright-red, juicy berry almost equal to Delecto. The plant is vigourous and productive.

Lnge.—

Lnge is another variety as hardy in plant as a real Beach Strawberry. The blossom is perfect and produced in profusion, tho every blossom doesn't make a berry; still it will make a reasonably good crop. It blossoms early and holds its blossoms and berries off the ground. The fruit is bright-red and of extremely high quality for dessert, canning, jam or preserves. Recommended only for planting near the coast of California.

Delecto.—

As its name indicates, Delecto is a most delectable berry. It is so juicy and delicious that it is just a big gulp of juice—that is if the fruit is quite ripe. If picked at the proper stage it is a good canner or near-by market berry. Delecto has a perfect blossom and is productive.

NEW VARIETIES

Besides these described in the foregoing, I have many other new and some old varieties in my trial grounds. Most of these have more or less plants available.

I can make up collections from these for those who wish to try them out. Most of these are good varieties and should be interesting for anyone having a taste to try out new things. I will make up collections of these, as well as those described, for $3.00, $5.00 and $10.00. Your money's worth guaranteed.

Prices.—

Plants are usually bunched 25 in a bunch. $2.00 per one hundred, postpaid, anywhere west of Denver, Col. 200 plants for $5.00, as above. 1000 plants $15.00, postpaid, in 4th zone.

I try to please everybody, but I don't, for some people wouldn't be happy if they were pleased. At any rate, I am doing this work more for the benefit of Horticulture, than I am doing it for the big money some people think there is in it. Your co-operation is needed and I will always try to do my part well by you, and I am human enough to appreciate that kindness of spirit that makes business a pleasure.

Warranty.—

Plants I guarantee to arrive in good condition, any reasonable distance. As to growth and productiveness in other parts—I am not to be held responsible. I have shipped plants to Austraila, Chili and Switzerland, but in these long-distance shipments, no responsibility for safe arrival is assumed.

ALBERT F. ETTER.